

and I thank the chairman and the ranking member for bringing this bill forward.

□ 1715

Women are joining the armed services in record numbers, Madam Speaker, and are an important part of the military and veteran communities. In recognition of the brave services these women are providing our country, it is incumbent on us to ensure that they are aware of the many benefits afforded to them.

Unfortunately, far too many women veterans are unaware of the healthcare services available for women through the Department of Veterans Affairs Veterans Health Administration. That is why VA and the Air Force partnered together to create a Women's Health Transition Training pilot program.

The pilot program provides servicewomen who are on the verge of leaving the military with information about the care they may be eligible to receive from VA, how to enroll in VA, and how to successfully transition to civilian life. In short, it empowers women to make informed decisions about their healthcare by educating them about the benefits available.

As of June 5, there have been 50 pilot sessions, Madam Speaker, and the women who have attended those sessions have reported a 98 percent satisfaction rate.

The Helping Expand and Launch Transitional Health for Women Veterans Act would extend the Women's Health Transition Training pilot program through fiscal year 2020 to ensure that women leaving the military continue to benefit from it.

This bill is sponsored, again, by Representative Gil Cisneros from California, and I thank the gentleman for his work. It is a very, very important bill.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this bill, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. CISNEROS), a veteran himself, the author of this legislation, and a member of the Veterans' Affairs Committee.

Mr. CISNEROS. Madam Speaker, I thank the chairman for yielding, and I again want to thank the gentleman from Florida for his support on this bill as well.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank Chairman TAKANO and Ranking Member ROE of the House Veterans' Affairs Committee for working with me to ensure my bill passed out of committee on a bipartisan basis.

Today, I rise to ask my colleagues for their support on my bill, H.R. 2942, the Helping Expand and Launch Transitional Health for Women Veterans Act, introduced with my colleague and fellow veteran, Congresswoman CRISSY HOULAHAN.

As a Navy veteran, one of my top priorities is ensuring that active service-

members transitioning into the civilian world are connected to the VA system and provided the best education and tools needed to succeed.

Despite being the fastest growing cohort in our military community, many servicewomen face unique challenges with their VA benefits. Studies have shown that women veterans, on average, connect with the VA nearly 3 years after military service, which can result in higher rates of physical and mental health issues. In a male-dominated VA system, it is not surprising why women veterans often report that they are uncomfortable seeking women-specific care.

My bill would require the Department of Veterans Affairs to extend an ongoing initiative with the Air Force and the Transition Assistance Program, which educates transitioning servicewomen about women's healthcare at the VA.

Specifically, the bill would mandate an extension of the program across all military service branches and require a report on the feasibility of making it permanent. Participants of this pilot program report an increased likelihood to use VA healthcare and have shown higher rates of confidence with the VA.

It is time our women servicemembers and veterans receive the care they need, and this bill will do just that. I urge my colleagues to join me in support of my bill to ensure that, when servicewomen transition to civilian life, they are provided with the information that will help them navigate their VA benefits in a commonsense way.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, I have no other speakers, and I am prepared to close.

I want to say that this is an outstanding bill. I am glad we worked on this bill because we have a lot of women veterans who need this, and I want to make it permanent. So, again, let's pass this bill as soon as possible and get it to the Senate.

Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I am also prepared to close.

I will say in my final remarks that I urge all of my colleagues to support our women veterans by joining me in passing this very important legislation, H.R. 2942, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 2942, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

RYAN KULES SPECIALLY ADAPTIVE HOUSING IMPROVEMENT ACT OF 2019

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 3504) to amend title 38, United States Code, to provide for improvements to the specially adapted housing program and educational assistance programs of the Department of Veterans Affairs, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 3504

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Ryan Kules Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019".

SEC. 2. PRIORITY IN AWARD OF SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING GRANTS TO SERIOUSLY ILL VETERANS.

(a) IN GENERAL.—Section 2101 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

"(d) PRIORITY FOR SERIOUSLY ILL VETERANS.—(1) In providing assistance under this section, the Secretary shall give priority to seriously ill veterans.

"(2) In this section, the term 'seriously ill veteran' shall have the meaning given such term by the Secretary."

(b) DEFINITION OF SERIOUSLY ILL VETERAN.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—By not later than 90 days after the date of the enactment of this Act, the Secretary of Veterans Affairs shall—

(A) determine the meaning of the term "seriously ill veteran" for purposes of subsection (d) of section 2101 of title 38, United States Code, as added by subsection (a); and

(B) submit to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives the meaning of such term as so determined.

(2) APPLICABILITY.—The definition of "seriously ill veteran" as determined under paragraph (1) shall apply for purposes of such subsection (d) beginning on the date that is 30 days after the date on which the Secretary submits to the Committees on Veterans' Affairs of the Senate and House of Representatives the definition of such term as so determined.

(c) EFFECTIVE DATE.—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall take effect on October 1, 2020, and apply with respect to assistance provided on or after that date.

SEC. 3. INCREASE IN AMOUNTS OF ASSISTANCE PROVIDED.

(a) INCREASE OF NUMBER OF GRANTS PER VETERAN.—Section 2102(d)(3) of such title is amended by striking "three" and inserting "six".

(b) INCREASE IN NUMBER OF APPLICATIONS AUTHORIZED TO BE APPROVED.—Section 2101(a)(4) of such title is amended by striking "30 applications" and inserting "120 applications".

(c) INCREASE IN MAXIMUM AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE FOR ADAPTATION TO VETERAN'S RESIDENCE.—Section 2102(b)(2) of such title is amended by striking "\$12,000" and inserting "\$19,733".

(d) INCREASE IN AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE FOR ACQUISITION OF HOUSING WITH SPECIAL FEATURES.—Section 2102(d)(1) of such title is amended by striking "\$63,780" and inserting "\$98,492".

(e) INCREASE IN AGGREGATE AMOUNT OF ASSISTANCE FOR ADAPTATIONS TO VETERANS' RESIDENCES.—Section 2102(d)(2) of such title

is amended by striking “\$12,756” and inserting “\$19,733”.

(f) **EFFECTIVE DATE AND APPLICATION.**—The amendments made by this section shall take effect on October 1, 2020. The amendments made by subsections (c) and (d) shall apply with respect to individuals who have not received the maximum amount of assistance under section 2101 of title 38, United States Code, before such date.

SEC. 4. PROVISION OF ADDITIONAL AMOUNTS OF SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING ASSISTANCE FOR CERTAIN VETERANS.

Section 2102 of such title is amended by adding at the end the following new subsection:

“(f)(1) Notwithstanding the aggregate amounts specified in subsection (d), a covered veteran may apply for and receive an additional amount of assistance under subsection (a) or (b) of section 2101 of this title in an amount that does not exceed half of the amount specified in subsection (d).

“(2) In this subsection, a covered veteran is a veteran who—

“(A) is described in section 2101(a)(2) of this title;

“(B) first receives assistance under this chapter on or after October 1, 2020;

“(C) as of the date of the veteran’s application for assistance under paragraph (1), most recently received assistance under this chapter more than ten years before such date; and

“(D) lives in a home that the Secretary determines does not have adaptations that are reasonably necessary because of the veteran’s disability.”.

SEC. 5. IMPROVEMENT TO WORK-STUDY ALLOWANCE PROGRAM.

(a) **PAYMENT OF ALLOWANCE.**—Subsection (a) of section 3485 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by striking “Individuals” and inserting “In accordance with paragraph (4), individuals”;

(2) by redesignating paragraphs (4), (5), and (6) as paragraphs (5), (6), and (7), respectively; and

(3) by inserting after paragraph (3) the following new paragraph:

“(4)(A) The Secretary shall carry out this section by providing to educational institutions an annual amount for the institution to use in paying work-study allowance under paragraph (1) to individuals enrolled at the institution.

“(B) With respect to an educational institution that participated in the work-study program under this section during the academic year beginning August 1, 2018, the Secretary shall determine the annual amount to provide to the educational institution under subparagraph (A) as follows:

“(i) For the academic year beginning August 1, 2020, the amount shall be the total amount the Secretary paid under this section to individuals enrolled at such educational institution during the academic year beginning August 1, 2018.

“(ii) Except as provided by subparagraph (D)(ii), for each academic year beginning on or after August 1, 2021, the amount shall be the total amount the educational institution paid under this section for work-study allowance to individuals enrolled at such educational institution during the previous academic year in which individuals participated in the work-study program.

“(C) With respect to an educational institution that did not participate in the work-study program under this section during the academic year beginning August 1, 2018, the Secretary shall determine the annual amount to provide to the educational institution under subparagraph (A) as follows:

“(i) For the first academic year in which the educational institution participates in

the work-study program beginning on or after August 1, 2020, the amount shall be an amount the Secretary determines appropriate based on amounts provided to similar educational institutions pursuant to subparagraph (B).

“(ii) Except as provided by subparagraph (D)(ii), for each academic year occurring after the academic year specified in clause (i), the amount shall be the total amount the educational institution paid under this section for work-study allowance to individuals enrolled at such educational institution during the previous academic year in which individuals enrolled at such educational institution participated in the work-study program.

“(D)(i) Except as provided in clause (ii), if the Secretary provides an annual amount to an educational institution under subparagraph (B) or (C) that is more than the total amount the educational institution pays to individuals under paragraph (1), the educational institution shall return to the Secretary the unpaid amount and the Secretary shall transfer such amount into the general fund of the Treasury.

“(ii) If the annual amount provided to an educational institution under subparagraph (B) or (C) is more, but less than 25 percent more, than the total amount the educational institution pays to individuals under paragraph (1), and the educational institution plans to participate in the work-study program under this section during the subsequent academic year, the educational institution may retain the amount of the overpayment if the educational institution notifies the Secretary of the amount of the overpayment and the intention of the educational institution to retain such amount. Any amount retained by an educational institution under this clause may only be used by the educational institution to provide work-study allowance to individuals enrolled at the educational institution.

“(iii) At any time an educational institution may request the Secretary to increase the annual amount that the Secretary provides the educational institution under subparagraph (B) or (C).

“(E) Pursuant to section 3690(c), section 3693, and other provisions of chapter 36 of this title, the Secretary shall ensure that educational institutions carry out the work-study allowance program in compliance with this section.”.

(b) **CONFORMING AMENDMENT.**—Subsection (e)(1) of such section is amended by striking “subsection (a)(4)” and inserting “subsection (a)(5)”.

(c) **APPLICATION.**—The amendments made by this section shall apply with respect to a quarter, semester, or term, as applicable, commencing on or after August 1, 2020.

SEC. 6. EXPANSION OF ELIGIBILITY FOR FRY SCHOLARSHIP TO CHILDREN AND SPOUSES OF CERTAIN DECEASED MEMBERS OF THE ARMED FORCES.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Subsection (b) of section 3311 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) by redesignating paragraph (10) as paragraph (12); and

(2) by inserting after paragraph (9) the following new paragraphs (10) and (11):

“(10) An individual who is the child or spouse of a person who, on or after September 11, 2001, dies in line of duty while serving on duty other than active duty as a member of the Armed Forces.

“(11) An individual who is the child or spouse of a member of the Selected Reserve who dies on or after September 11, 2001—

“(A) from a service-connected disability; and

“(B) not later than four years after the date of the last discharge or release of that

member from active duty or active duty for training.”.

(b) **APPLICABILITY DATE.**—The amendments made by subsection (a) apply with respect to a quarter, semester, or term, as applicable, commencing on or after August 1, 2020.

(c) **CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.**—

(1) Subsection (f) of such section is amended by striking “paragraph (9)” each place it appears and inserting “paragraphs (9), (10), and (11)”.

(2) Section 3322 of such title is amended—

(A) in subsection (e), by striking both “sections 3311(b)(9) and 3319” and inserting “section 3319 and paragraph (9), (10), or (11) of section 3311 of this title”;

(B) in subsection (f), by striking “section 3311(b)(9)” and inserting “paragraph (9), (10), or (11) of section 3311 of this title”; and

(C) in subsection (h)(2), by striking “either section 3311(b)(9) or chapter 35” and inserting “either chapter 35 or paragraph (9), (10), or (11) of section 3311”.

SEC. 7. TREATMENT OF CERTAIN PREPARATORY COURSES AS PROGRAMS OF EDUCATION FOR PURPOSES OF DEPARTMENT OF VETERANS AFFAIRS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS.

(a) **IN GENERAL.**—Chapter 33 of title 38, United States Code, is amended by inserting after section 3315A the following new section:

“§ 3315B. Preparatory courses for licensure, certification, or national tests

“(a) **IN GENERAL.**—An individual entitled to educational assistance under this chapter shall also be entitled to payment for a preparatory course for a licensing or certification test that is required or used to enter into, maintain, or advance in employment in a predetermined and identified vocation or profession.

“(b) **AMOUNT.**—The amount of educational assistance payable under this chapter for a course described in subsection (a) is the lesser of—

“(1) the fee charged for the course; or

“(2) the amount of entitlement available to the individual under this chapter at the time of payment for the course under this section.

“(c) **CHARGE AGAINST ENTITLEMENT.**—The number of months of entitlement charged an individual under this chapter for a course described in subsection (a) shall be pro-rated based on the actual amount of the fee charged for the course relative to the rate for 1 month payable—

“(1) for the academic year beginning on August 1, 2020, \$1,460; or

“(2) for an academic year beginning on any subsequent August 1, the amount for the previous academic year beginning on August 1 under this subsection, as increased by the percentage increase equal to the most recent percentage increase determined under section 3015(h).”.

(b) **CLERICAL AMENDMENT.**—The table of sections at the beginning of such chapter is amended by inserting after the item relating to section 3315A the following new item:

“3315B. Preparatory courses for licensure, certification, or national tests.”.

(c) **CONFORMING AMENDMENTS.**—Section 3532(g) of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in paragraph (1), by inserting “or a preparatory course described in section 3315B(a) of this title” after “or national test providing an opportunity for course credit at institutions of higher learning described in section 3501(a)(5) of this title”; and

(2) in paragraphs (2) and (3), by inserting “or preparatory course” after “test” everywhere it appears.

(d) **EFFECTIVE DATE.**—The amendment made by subsection (a) shall apply with respect to months beginning after the date of the enactment of this Act.

SEC. 8. ADJUSTMENT OF LOAN FEES.

Section 3729(b)(2) of title 38, United States Code, is amended by striking the loan fee table and inserting the following:

“Type of loan	Active duty veteran	Reservist	Other obligor
(A)(i) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other initial loan described in section 3710(a) other than with 5-down or 10-down (closed on or after October 1, 2004, and before January 1, 2020)	2.15	2.40	NA
(A)(ii) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other initial loan described in section 3710(a) other than with 5-down or 10-down (closed on or after January 1, 2020, and before October 1, 2027)	2.30	2.30	NA
(A)(iii) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other initial loan described in section 3710(a) other than with 5-down or 10-down (closed on or after October 1, 2027, and before October 1, 2029)	2.15	2.15	NA
(A)(iv) Initial loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other initial loan described in section 3710(a) other than with 5-down or 10-down (closed on or after October 1, 2029)	1.40	1.40	NA
(B)(i) Subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) (closed on or after October 1, 2004, and before January 1, 2020)	3.30	3.30	NA
(B)(ii) Subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) (closed on or after January 1, 2020, and before October 1, 2027)	3.60	3.60	NA
(B)(iii) Subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) (closed on or after October 1, 2027, and before October 1, 2029)	3.30	3.30	NA
(B)(iv) Subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 0-down, or any other subsequent loan described in section 3710(a) (closed on or after October 1, 2029)	1.25	1.25	NA
(C)(i) Loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 5-down (closed before January 1, 2020)	1.50	1.75	NA
(C)(ii) Loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 5-down (closed on or after January 1, 2020, and before October 1, 2027)	1.65	1.65	NA
(C)(iii) Loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 5-down (closed on or after October 1, 2027, and before October 1, 2029)	1.50	1.50	NA
(C)(iv) Loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 5-down (closed on or after October 1, 2029)	0.75	0.75	NA
(D)(i) Loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 10-down (closed before January 1, 2020)	1.25	1.50	NA
(D)(ii) Loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 10-down (closed on or after January 1, 2020, and before October 1, 2027)	1.40	1.40	NA
(D)(iii) Loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 10-down (closed on or after October 1, 2027, and before October 1, 2029)	1.25	1.25	NA
(D)(iv) Loan described in section 3710(a) to purchase or construct a dwelling with 10-down (closed on or after October 1, 2029)	0.50	0.50	NA
(E) Interest rate reduction refinancing loan	0.50	0.50	NA
(F) Direct loan under section 3711	1.00	1.00	NA
(G) Manufactured home loan under section 3712 (other than an interest rate reduction refinancing loan)	1.00	1.00	NA
(H) Loan to Native American veteran under section 3762 (other than an interest rate reduction refinancing loan)	1.25	1.25	NA
(I) Loan assumption under section 3714	0.50	0.50	0.50
(J) Loan under section 3733(a)	2.25	2.25	2.25”.

SEC. 9. AUTHORITY OF SECRETARY OF VETERANS AFFAIRS TO ASSIST BLIND VETERANS WHO HAVE NOT LOST USE OF A LEG IN ACQUIRING SPECIALLY ADAPTED HOUSING.

Section 2101 of title 38, United States Code, is amended—

(1) in subsection (a)(2)(B)(ii)—

(A) in the matter preceding subclause (I), by striking “due to—” and inserting “due to blindness in both eyes, having central visual acuity of 20/200 or less in the better eye with the use of a standard correcting lens. For the purposes of this clause, an eye with a limitation in the fields of vision such that the widest diameter of the visual field subtends an angle no greater than 20 degrees shall be considered as having a central visual acuity of 20/200 or less.”; and

(B) by striking subclauses (I) and (II); and

(2) in subsection (b)(2)—

(A) by striking subparagraph (A); and

(B) by redesignating subparagraphs (B) and (C) as subparagraphs (A) and (B), respectively.

SEC. 10. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled “Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation” for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that

such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) and the gentleman from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to insert extraneous material on H.R. 3504, as amended.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, the Veterans’ Affairs Committee is proud to bring to the floor H.R. 3504, as amended, the Ryan Kules Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019, which is named after Army veteran Ryan Kules.

Madam Speaker, we are honored to have Ryan with us today.

Ryan’s vehicle was struck by an explosive device in 2005, which took the lives of Sergeant Jerry Mills and Sergeant Donald Hasse, and took Ryan’s right arm and left leg.

He was able to use the VA’s Specially Adapted Housing program to modify his house to suit his needs and the needs of his wife and children. However, the program simply didn’t provide enough assistance, leaving Ryan and his family owing more than \$90,000 out of pocket for improvements.

The VA’s Specially Adapted Housing program offers grants to servicemembers and veterans with certain severe service-connected disabilities. The grants assist with building, remodeling, or purchasing an adapted home. However, portions of the program don’t reflect the needs of today’s veterans, which is why I am proud of our work on the House Veterans’ Affairs Committee to make the SAH program work for today’s veterans.

H.R. 3504, as amended, does this by prioritizing grants for seriously ill veterans, doubling the cap on the total number of grants issued to a veteran, increasing the total applications authorized, and increasing the maximum

benefit for up to 50 percent of the cost of a specially adapted home.

In addition, this legislation doesn't stop there. H.R. 3504, as amended, includes legislation from Representative LURIA regarding expanding the SAH program to cover blind veterans.

I was shocked to learn that the existing SAH program only covers blind veterans who also have lost a limb. H.R. 3504, as amended, includes Representative LURIA's Housing Access for Blind Veterans Act.

I heard from a blind veteran in Ponce, Puerto Rico, last weekend about some of the challenges that he faces. As Puerto Rico continues to rebuild after Hurricane Maria, allowing disabled veterans, including veterans with visual impairments, to apply for Specially Adapted Housing grants can help repair and improve their homes and lives.

I thank the gentlewoman for her work and Ranking Member ROE's support.

Also, H.R. 3504, as amended, includes Representative SABLON's GI Bill Access to Career Credentials Act. This legislation expands the GI Bill to cover preparatory courses for professional tests, allowing veterans to more easily obtain career credentials.

Finally, H.R. 3504, as amended, includes a modernization of the VA's work-study program, streamlining the payment process to make work-study programs easier for veterans to participate in.

I thank Ranking Member BILIRAKIS and Chairman LEVIN for bringing this legislation to the committee, fully paid for.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support H.R. 3504, as amended, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I am proud to rise today in support of my bill, H.R. 3504, as amended, the Ryan Kules Specially Adaptive Housing Improvement Act of 2019.

Our highest calling as a committee is to empower those who have been injured in defense of our country to live independent and productive lives.

The Specially Adapted Housing program, or SAH grant program, is one way we do that, and this bill makes several needed improvements to that program.

SAH grants are awarded to certain severely injured servicemembers and veterans to help them adapt their homes to increase their comfort and independence. It is a quality of life issue, Madam Speaker.

SAH grants can be used to make all kinds of home adaptations, including installing grab bars, wheelchair ramps and lifts, lowering countertops, and widening hallways and doorways.

My bill would make needed improvements to this program and provide prioritization when processing SAH

grants for veterans with serious illnesses like ALS.

It would also double the number of times a veteran can use an SAH grant and increase the base amount of funding available to veterans by 15 percent.

Finally, this bill would authorize VA to provide additional funding for veterans 10 years after they use their SAH grants to make additional home improvements as they age. So, of course, they might want to get into a bigger house because their families grow, and they should have that opportunity to do so.

This bill also includes H.R. 3640, the Housing Access for Blind Veterans Act, which was introduced last week by Representative ROE and Representative ELAINE LURIA from Virginia, the chair of the Subcommittee on Disability Assistance and Memorial Affairs, to provide additional SAH funding to veterans who are legally blind. It is so important that we do this.

I am proud to have named this bill after my friend Ryan Kules, an Army veteran, and I had the privilege of meeting him today and his wonderful family. It is a beautiful family.

On November 29, 2005, while he was serving in Iraq, Ryan's vehicle was struck by an improvised explosive device, an IED, and Ryan sustained multiple injuries, including the loss of his leg and arm. He is a true hero, Madam Speaker.

Those injuries made him eligible for the SAH grant program following his separation from service. Many of the ideas in this bill came from Ryan's own experiences with the SAH program.

I am grateful to Ryan for his service, for his continued advocacy, and for allowing us to use his name for this important legislation.

Madam Speaker, I want to thank the Wounded Warriors Project and the Paralyzed Veterans of America for their help with crafting this bill, as well as my friend and chairman, Representative MIKE LEVIN from California, who is the cosponsor of this bill and who does an outstanding job in committee, where we work in a bipartisan fashion.

□ 1730

Madam Speaker, this bill also includes the text of H.R. 3535, the GI Bill Work Study Improvement Act. This bill was introduced by my friend, Representative RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois, Representative SUSIE LEE of Nevada, and Ranking Member ROE of Tennessee to improve VA's workstudy program.

The idea for this bill came from the student veterans and school officials who attended a GI Bill forum that Representative DAVIS had, and Representative ROE was in attendance, of course. He is the ranking member of the full committee.

I commend Representative DAVIS for taking the concerns of his student veterans' constituents to heart and acting to address them by improving the way that those payments are made to eligible GI beneficiaries. The best ideas

come from the people, Madam Speaker, as you know.

This would entail changes to the current process where the student veterans are paid workstudy benefits by VA to a new process where student veterans are paid directly by their school. This makes sense. This will be done by block granting workstudy money to schools allowing them to administer the payments to student veterans. This will improve timeliness and accuracy of payments to student veterans.

Finally, H.R. 3504, as amended, also includes the text of my bill, H.R. 2221, the Fry Scholarship Improvement Act, which would expand eligibility for the Fry Scholarship to certain survivors of members of the National Guard and Reserve. Representative ANDY BARR worked on this bill as well, and he was a great advocate. Of course, he is an advocate for the National Guard and Reserve, Madam Speaker. The current Fry Scholarship provides post 9/11 GI Bill benefits to surviving spouses and dependent children of servicemembers who have died while on Active Duty.

I would like to thank the Tragedy Assistance Program for Survivors, or TAPS, for bringing this idea to our attention and again Chairman LEVIN for being an original cosponsor of this bill.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to join me in supporting this important piece of legislation today.

Madam Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. RODNEY DAVIS).

Mr. RODNEY DAVIS of Illinois. Madam Speaker, I thank my good friend from Florida (Mr. BILIRAKIS), the chair, Mr. TAKANO, and also Dr. ROE, the ranking member and former chair of the Veterans' Affairs Committee, for all the work they do for our veterans.

It was at a meeting with Dr. ROE in Springfield, Illinois, last summer that he heard from my constituents who represented the 13 colleges that I am blessed to represent in central Illinois. They got together, and they talked about the GI Bill Work Study Improvement Act language that is included in this bill right now.

Section 5 of this bill contains our improvement language, and I really want to thank SUSIE LEE, my colleague. I want to thank Dr. ROE again and my colleague, MIKE BOST, from Illinois because this legislation creates a block grant program to disburse the funding that would normally be used by the VA to administer their workstudy program.

We heard from the college administrators. It wasn't going well as is; they were leaving veterans behind. They didn't know if the students were going to be able to enroll, and the colleges didn't know when they were going to get the money. This is a fix that came directly from listening to the people who are serving our veterans at our educational institutions.

This is what bipartisanship looks like. It is an idea that comes from people who are affected, and those who are

affected are our heroes who protect our great Nation. This change is necessary, this change is bipartisan, and this change is long overdue. I want to thank everybody again for working on this bill.

Madam Speaker, I urge a "yes" vote on this bill.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I want to just add that I hear an equal number of names mentioned from both sides of the aisle who have contributed to the content of this bill. This is what bipartisanship looks like. I am very proud that we have brought this bill out of committee on a unanimous basis and that I have heard each side mention multiple names of Members who have contributed language to this bill.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BILIRAKIS. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time to close.

This is a great bill named after a great American hero. We need to pass this bill. I want to thank the leadership of the chairman and the ranking member for bringing it to the floor.

Again, we have got to get this done for our heroes. We have got to get it to the Senate and pass it as soon as possible because it is so badly needed. I appreciate it very much. I thank the staff for their support.

Madam Speaker, I encourage Members to vote positive on this particular bill, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. TAKANO. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

Madam Speaker, I am very proud of this moment that we have chosen as Members of the House to move forward legislation that addresses adaptive housing for veterans who have truly been heroic. I can't think of a single American who would stand in the way or would criticize Members of our body for addressing such an urgent need.

I want to congratulate all the Members who have done an even greater honor to the person for whom this bill is named by addressing issues related to the workstudy program, by increasing the availability of benefits to our veterans in their educational process.

Madam Speaker, I urge all of my colleagues to join me in passing H.R. 3504, as amended, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. SABLON. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H.R. 3504, which includes my bipartisan bill, the GI Bill Access to Career Credentials Act. The GI Bill Access to Career Credentials Act allow veterans to use their GI Bill benefits to cover the cost of approved preparatory courses for professional license and certification exams.

Covering these courses under the GI Bill will give veterans and their eligible family members greater ability to enter careers that require government-recognized licenses and certifications, such as in-demand careers in health and technology.

This is not the first time Congress has expanded GI bill benefit to cover non-tuition expenses. Over the last 75 years, we have broadened the GI bill to cover college admissions test fees, admissions test preparatory courses, and the exam fees for licenses and certifications.

And, while more than 5,700 GI Bill students over the last year and a half used their license and certification exam fees reimbursement benefit, the courses designed to help them pass these tests were not reimbursable. That makes no sense. Not all students pass these exams on the first attempt. If we really want to help our veterans become licensed and certified for demanding careers, let us help them prepare to pass the necessary tests.

Let us help them join the more than 25 million veterans and veteran family members who the GI Bill has helped achieve their educational and career goals.

My GI Bill Access to Career Credentials Act is supported by the Veterans of Foreign Wars, National Guard Association, Enlisted Association of the National Guard, AMVETS, National Military Family Association, Association of the U.S. Army, Military Order of the Purple Heart, Fleet Reserve Association, Reserve Officers Association and Paralyzed Veterans of America.

I ask my colleagues to support this measure, as well, and H.R. 3504 of which it is a part.

H.R. 3504 expands the VA's Specially Adapted Housing grant program to reach more veterans who need assistance and improves the Fry Scholarship program to cover more spouses and children of fallen servicemembers.

Again, I ask my colleagues to support H.R. 3504.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. TAKANO) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 3504, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill, as amended, was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

VENEZUELA TPS ACT OF 2019

Ms. MUCARSEL-POWELL. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and pass the bill (H.R. 549) to designate Venezuela under section 244 of the Immigration and Nationality Act to permit nationals of Venezuela to be eligible for temporary protected status under such section, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 549

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Venezuela TPS Act of 2019".

SEC. 2. DESIGNATION FOR PURPOSES OF GRANTING TEMPORARY PROTECTED STATUS.

(a) DESIGNATION.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—For purposes of section 244 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1254a), Venezuela shall be treated as if it had been designated under subsection (b)(1)(C) of that section, subject to the provisions of this section.

(2) PERIOD OF DESIGNATION.—The initial period of the designation referred to in paragraph (1) shall be for the 18-month period beginning on the date of the enactment of this Act.

(b) ALIENS ELIGIBLE.—As a result of the designation made under subsection (a), an alien who is a national of Venezuela is deemed to satisfy the requirements under paragraph (1) of section 244(c) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1254a(c)), subject to paragraph (3) of such section, if the alien—

(1) has been continuously physically present in the United States since the date of the enactment of this Act;

(2) is admissible as an immigrant, except as otherwise provided in paragraph (2)(A) of such section, and is not ineligible for temporary protected status under paragraph (2)(B) of such section; and

(3) registers for temporary protected status in a manner established by the Secretary of Homeland Security.

(c) CONSENT TO TRAVEL ABROAD.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—The Secretary of Homeland Security shall give prior consent to travel abroad, in accordance with section 244(f)(3) of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1254a(f)(3)), to an alien who is granted temporary protected status pursuant to the designation made under subsection (a) if the alien establishes to the satisfaction of the Secretary of Homeland Security that emergency and extenuating circumstances beyond the control of the alien require the alien to depart for a brief, temporary trip abroad.

(2) TREATMENT UPON RETURN.—An alien returning to the United States in accordance with an authorization described in paragraph (1) shall be treated as any other returning alien provided temporary protected status under section 244 of the Immigration and Nationality Act (8 U.S.C. 1254a).

(d) FEE.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—In addition to any other fee authorized by law, the Secretary of Homeland Security is authorized to charge and collect a fee of \$360 for each application for temporary protected status under section 244 of the Immigration and Nationality Act by a person who is only eligible for such status by reason of subsection (a).

(2) WAIVER.—The Secretary of Homeland Security shall permit aliens to apply for a waiver of any fees associated with filing an application referred to in paragraph (1).

SEC. 3. DETERMINATION OF BUDGETARY EFFECTS.

The budgetary effects of this Act, for the purpose of complying with the Statutory Pay-As-You-Go Act of 2010, shall be determined by reference to the latest statement titled "Budgetary Effects of PAYGO Legislation" for this Act, submitted for printing in the Congressional Record by the Chairman of the House Budget Committee, provided that such statement has been submitted prior to the vote on passage.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. MUCARSEL-POWELL) and the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CLINE) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. MUCARSEL-POWELL. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that